

I ⁻¹⁸⁻ Claim:

Claims

5 ~~1. A method to inhibit virion morphogenesis, production, release or uncoating which method comprises contacting cells infected with a virus with an effective amount of an agent which inhibits the prenylation or the post-prenylation reactions of said at least one viral protein .~~

10 ~~2. The method of claim 1 wherein said agent is an inhibitor of prenyl group synthesis or wherein said agent is an inhibitor of prenyl transferase, or wherein said agent mimics a prenyl group or wherein said agent mimics the prenylation locus of the viral protein.~~

15 ~~3. The method of claim 1 wherein said viral protein contains a C-terminal amino acid sequence of the formula CXXX, XCXX, XXCX or XXXC wherein C is cysteine and each X is independently any amino acid.~~

20 ~~4. The method of claim 2 wherein said agent mimics said CXXX, XCXX, XXCX or XXXC~~

25 ~~5. The method of claim 1 wherein said agent interferes with a post-prenylation reaction.~~

30 ~~6. The method of claim 1 wherein said virion is hepatitis D virus (HDV) and said viral protein is the large delta antigen of said HDV.~~

35 ~~7. The method of claim 6 wherein said inhibition is effected by a transdominant inhibitor of replication modified to resist prenylation~~

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8. The method of claim 1 wherein said virion
is human immunodeficiency virus and said viral protein is
the nef protein.

5 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said cell is
contained in an animal or plant subject and said
contacting comprises administering said agent to said
subject.

10 10. A method to screen candidate drugs as
prenylation inhibitors which method comprises contacting
cells which secrete or which have been modified to
secrete a first protein containing a "CXXX" box and a
second control protein wherein secretion of said first
15 protein is dependent on prenylation and secretion of said
second control protein is not dependent on prenylation,
with said candidate drug under conditions
wherein said control second protein is secreted, and
determining the presence, absence or amount of
20 said first protein secreted from said cells,
wherein a candidate drug which decreases or
abolishes the amount of secreted first protein is said
effective prenylation inhibitor.

25 11. The method of claim 10 wherein said first
protein is a large delta antigen.

30 12. The method of claim 10 wherein said first
protein is a chimera consisting of a natively secreted
protein which has been modified to contain, in place of
its "CXXX" box, the "CXXX" box of a different protein.

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